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"On the eve of this year's hurricane season I am encouraged that the Task Force has realized the urgency of protecting the residents and businesses along the Gulf Coast," said Melancon.

"I call on the rest of Congress to join the Task Force and the Louisiana delegation in supporting this comprehensive approach to hurricane protection."

"I commend Charlie Melancon, Gene Taylor and our Democratic Katrina Task Force for their work on the MARC Act," said James E. Clyburn, Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus. "It has been eight months since Hurricane Katrina destroyed our Gulf Coast, yet here we are at the start of a new hurricane season still fighting for essential levee and coastal restoration to take place. We can do better than this. The MARC Act must move forward. Action must be taken to protect the families and communities of Louisiana and Mississippi."

Unlike the full WRDA which contains economic development and navigation projects, the MARC Act focuses exclusively on hurricane protection and coastal restoration. A recent bipartisan investigation of Katrina by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs found that, "[i]n order to protect coastal areas from becoming increasingly vulnerable to damage from hurricanes, ecological restoration efforts must be integrated into hurricane protection in a comprehensive manner that addresses the root causes of ongoing ecological and geological processes, such as the loss of coastal wetlands and regional subsidence."

"One of the important things about this bill," added Melancon, "is that it lets us immediately get to work on our short term needs, but also includes long term planning and projects to make sure what we do now helps us get where we need to be for future hurricane seasons. This isn't a matter of Louisiana's wants. It's a matter of what we need to protect our homes and families."

Among the projects in the bill are authorizations for:

- The Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection System that will protect 200,000 people in

Southeast Louisiana who are currently exposed to a Katrina-like storm.

- A Comprehensive study to determine the feasibility of constructing hurricane flood protection in Southwest Louisiana.
- Changes in the way the Corps handles dredge material to better make use of sediment for coastal restoration.
- Authority for the Corps to waive the non-federal share for a project in a disadvantaged community or in a coastal community impacted by a 2005 hurricane;
- Raising the Federal participation limit from \$7,000,000 to \$15,000,000 for certain coastal state projects.
- A Mississippi Coastal Area study to plan for coastal area improvements for hurricane damage and erosion prevention.

The 2005 hurricane season highlighted the need for comprehensive, integrated storm protection and coastal restoration work. As a legislative package, the MARC Act provides many of the authorizations necessary for these projects to begin while keeping the authorizations focused enough to avoid much of the political entanglements that have stalled the WRDA bill in the U.S. Senate for four years.

The MARC Act is being sponsored by all seven House members from Louisiana.